



Embassy of the United States of America

American Citizen Services
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: U.S. CITIZENSHIP

Is it true that anyone born in the United States is a U.S. citizen?

Yes, almost anybody born in the United States is an American citizen regardless of the nationality or status of his/her parents. The only exception is for children of foreign diplomats who have full diplomatic immunity. Anyone else can apply for an American passport by presenting an original birth certificate showing birth in the United States and adequate identity documents. For more information, please visit http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/passports/fta.html .

Can I hold more than one passport or nationality?

Yes. In the 1980's, the Supreme Court ruled that citizenship is a constitutional right that cannot be taken away from a citizen who does not intend to relinquish it. Therefore, such actions as naturalization in a foreign country, employment with a foreign government, and/or voting in a foreign election do not automatically jeopardize American citizenship. However, please note that all U.S. citizens, even dual nationals, must enter and depart the United States on U.S. passports.

The State Department Advice about Possible Loss of U.S. Citizenship and Dual Nationality has further details at http://travel.state.gov/law/citizenship/citizenship_778.html .

I am an American citizen, but also have a foreign passport. Can I use my foreign passport to travel to the United States?

No. Under U.S. law, U.S. citizens must be in possession of a valid U.S. passport to enter or leave the United States. This is true even if you hold a passport from another country. If your U.S. passport has been lost or stolen, or if it has expired, you must apply to replace it before traveling to the United States.

My mother/father was a U.S. citizen, but I was born outside the U.S. Can I be a U.S. citizen too?

Maybe. For more detailed information, please visit our website at:

http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/passports/citizenship.html

I am an American citizen. I recently had a child born in the United Kingdom. Does s/he have a claim to American citizenship?

Possibly. Your child's claim to citizenship depends on several factors. Please visit http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/passports/childindex.html for further information.

If I cannot transmit citizenship to my child, is there any way that s/he may become a U.S. citizen?

Yes. Please visit http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/passports/robirth3.html for further information.

We are Americans living in Great Britain. We just adopted a child and s/he is living with us here. How do we get him/her an American passport?

Adoption by a U.S. citizen parent does not automatically confer citizenship, but it does qualify a child for expeditious naturalization, or citizenship upon entry to the U.S. For more information, please visit our website at http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/passports/act.html .

My child has both British and American citizenship. At what age must s/he choose which citizenship s/he wants to keep?

American citizenship is for life. The laws covering the retention of citizenship have been greatly liberalized - thanks in large part to the lobbying of American community groups overseas. No child has to do anything at any age to retain, choose, affirm, or confirm American citizenship. In the 1980's, the Supreme Court ruled that citizenship is a Constitutional right, which cannot be taken away from a citizen who does not intend to relinquish it.

Can my spouse obtain a U.S. passport or citizenship through marriage?

A U.S. citizen cannot transmit citizenship to a spouse. Your spouse would be required to apply for an immigrant visa (http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/visa/iv/index.html) and reside in the United States as a lawful permanent resident (LPR). An application for naturalization can be made to the Department of Homeland Security on fulfilling a residency requirement. Once naturalized, your spouse would be eligible to apply for a U.S. passport.

I lost my citizenship long ago because I got a job with the British government. I have heard that things have changed. Can I be American again?

Probably. The same Supreme Court decisions mentioned above have opened the way for review of many loss of citizenship cases. Although each case is different, many do not stand up to the revised level of scrutiny and can be vacated with the consequent restoration of citizenship. For more information regarding your personal circumstances, please contact us by email at londonpassports@state.gov or by letter to

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